

On The Hill

New Bills Set Stage For Tech Debates In 108th Congress

by [Maureen Sirhal](#) and [Chloe Albanesius](#)

Lawmakers introduced a flurry of new technology-related measures this week as Congress adjourned temporarily before the Nov. 5 election. Although the focus of an expected lame-duck session after the election will be annual spending bills and homeland security, some lawmakers dropped the new bills in the hopper to try to set the stage for action in the 108th Congress.

Signaling what may become the next battle in what seems to be an escalating war between Silicon Valley and Hollywood, House Judiciary Committee Chairman **James Sensenbrenner**, R-Wis., introduced a measure that would reverse the recent FCC ruling forcing television and electronics makers to install digital TV tuners in their products by 2007.

He introduced the legislation, H.R. 5685, a day after the [Consumer Electronics Association](#) sued to overturn the FCC's August decision, which is part of the effort to shift the nation from analog to digital broadcasting.

Also on the intellectual property front, Sen. **Ron Wyden**, D-Ore., filed a resolution, S.J. Res. 51, that would recognize consumers' "fair use" rights to copy digital goods such as movies and music. Rep. **Christopher Cox**, R-Calif., introduced a similar House resolution.

Meanwhile, Rep. **Mike Honda**, D-Calif., authored a measure, H.R. 5669, that would establish a board to help advise the president on nanoscience and nanotechnology initiatives. A Honda spokesman said the measure is designed to publicize the importance of nanotechnology and build support for the issue in the next congressional session.

Honda plans to introduce similar legislation in the 108th Congress, the spokesman said. "This issue is an important issue, and we're staking our claims so to speak."

Recent news events sparked the introduction of two other bills. One measure, S. 3117, would extend the "cooling-off period" in the labor dispute between shipping firms and union dock workers at 29 West Coast ports. The other bill, H.R. 5663, would create a ballistics database for tracking gun owners, an idea fueled in part by unsolved sniper shootings in Washington.

The House acted quickly on another new measure, [H.R. 5647](#), passing it by voice vote. The legislation would extend the contract for building a Navy-Marine Corp intranet from five years to seven years.

Here is a brief look at other tech-related bills introduced this week:

- S. Res. 351, which condemns the posting to the Internet of video and pictures showing the terrorism-related murder earlier this year of *Wall Street Journal* reporter **Daniel Pearl**. The Senate adopted the resolution.
- H.R. 5671, which would create premium security measures, including a standards-based e-mail encryption system, within the proposed Homeland Security Department.
- H.R. 5646, which would require pharmacies, insurance companies and other health entities to receive patient consent before using health data to market specific remedies.
- S. 3112, which would provide a tax deferral to firms that sell for cash the assets of their telecommunications businesses to small telecom companies.
- H.R. 5689, which would authorize \$1 million for projects to promote intellectual property systems in developing countries.
- S. 3140, which would clarify standards for state sex-offender registration programs.